

The war in Minden ended with the arrival of the British Army on April 6, 1945. Apparently, the Deppe family and several others were not quick enough to hang out white flags as a sign of surrender, and a few short artillery bursts were issued by the invaders as warnings. “As soon as we hung out our white sheet, it was quiet,” recalled Hans Otto. The British were kind to the people of Minden; most homes were not searched, and the conquerors did what they could to provide employment for local workers. Sister Deppe and her children spent much of their time doing outdoor cleanup and janitorial work.

The city of Minden lost at least 448 civilians during the war and more than 1,300 soldiers. Of the homes in the city limits, 36 percent were damaged or totally destroyed.⁴



Fig.2. Members of the Minden Branch and friends gathered for this photograph in 1937. (H. O. Deppe)

In 1946, the Deppe family was blessed by the return of their father from a POW camp in Canada. They had known for some time that he had survived the war because he was allowed to send several cards home. However, tragedy struck this family in the death of Victor, a son of Sister Deppe from her first marriage and a half-brother of Hans Otto. Victor had been a soldier in the Wehrmacht and was captured at the end of the war. The family was later informed that while attempting to escape from a Polish POW camp in order to reach home for Christmas 1945, he was captured and punished by beheading.

The Minden Branch was weakened but alive and well when World War II came to an end in May 1945. The members there continued to meet in apartments for some time, and the future brought steady growth among the Saints in that city.

No members of the Minden Branch are known to have died during World War II.

NOTES

1. Minden city archive.
2. Hans Otto Deppe, interview by the author in German, Dortmund, Germany, August 8, 2006; summarized in English by Judith Sartowski.
3. Presiding Bishopric, “Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955,” 257, CHL CR 4 12.
4. Minden city archive.

MÜNCHEHAGEN BRANCH

The town of Münchehagen had only 1,596 residents in 1939, of whom barely a dozen were Latter-day Saints.¹ Located at the northeastern edge of the state of Westphalia, Münchehagen was seven miles directly north of its sister branch in Stadthagen and thirty-five miles northeast of the city of Bielefeld in the district of the same name.

No eyewitness stories of the Münchehagen Branch can be located as of this writing, but the directory of the West German Mission shows the name of Friedrich Möller as branch president with Ernst Wesemann as his first counselor. The only other name appearing in that directory is that of Ernst’s wife, Frieda, who was serving as the secretary of the Sunday School.² According to the statistical report of the branch filed just months after the German invasion of Poland, Möller and Wesemann were holders of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Branch meetings were held in the Wesemann home, with the address identified simply as

Münchehagen 268.³ Sunday School took place at 2:00 p.m. and was followed by sacrament meeting at 3:30. No meetings were held during the week; the membership was too small to support auxiliary organizations.

The British army invaded the town without incident in April 1945. The only thing known about the fate of this branch is that Ernst Wesemann lost his life while serving in the Wehrmacht in Russia. It is very possible that the branch organization ceased to exist by 1945 and that the surviving members joined with the Saints in Stadthagen.

Münchhagen Branch ⁴	1939
Elders	0
Priests	2
Teachers	2
Deacons	0
Other Adult Males	3
Adult Females	7
Male Children	0
Female Children	1
<i>Total</i>	15

IN MEMORIAM

At least one member of the Münchehagen Branch did not survive World War II:

Fritz Ernst Wilhelm Wesemann b. Münchehagen, Hannover, 18 May 1910; son of Heinrich Wesemann and Karoline Waltemath; bp. 2 Aug 1929; conf. 2 Aug 1929; ord. deacon 6 Apr 1930; lance corporal; d. in field hospital 6/542 at Ljuban 8 Feb 1942; bur. Sologubowka-St. Petersburg, Russia (FHL microfilm 68801 no. 9; www.volksbund.de; IGI)

NOTES

1. Münchehagen city archive.
2. West German Mission manuscript history, CHL MS 10045 2.
3. Smaller towns in Germany had no street names in those days. Addresses consisted solely of house numbers.

4. Presiding Bishopric, "Financial, Statistical, and Historical Reports of Wards, Stakes, and Missions, 1884–1955," 257, CHL CR 4 12.

STADTHAGEN BRANCH

Located twenty miles west of the major city of Hanover, the town of Stadthagen had been home to a strong branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the early twentieth century. When World War II began, there were sixty-six members in the branch, including nineteen holders of the priesthood, in a town with a population of 28,389.¹ Several leaders in the Bielefeld District called this branch their home, principally district president Alfred Hegemeister.

Stadthagen Branch ²	1939
Elders	7
Priests	6
Teachers	2
Deacons	4
Other Adult Males	9
Adult Females	31
Male Children	5
Female Children	2
<i>Total</i>	66

According to the directory of the West German Mission in Frankfurt, the president of the Stadthagen Branch in the fall of 1939 was Karl Borcharding Sr. of nearby Ottensen.³ Heinrich Rahde and Wilhelm Tegmeier Sr. were his counselors. There were at that time leaders and secretaries for all organizations and programs with the exception of the Primary, possibly because only seven children were on the branch rolls.

Church meetings were held in rented rooms on Niedernstrasse 25 as the war approached. Sunday